



# FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

# SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 8/7/2022

Series: Hope In a Hostile World

Text: 1 Peter 5:1-5

**BIG IDEA:** Elders provide leadership, encouragement, and direction to God's people.

**ICEBREAKER:** Who have been good leaders in your life? What made them good leaders?

**CONTEXT:** Peter now shifts in Chapter 5 to speak to the leaders, the Elders of the churches. Peter has laid out the importance of believers living in community and submitting to authority. He wants to focus on those who lead within the local church and how they should care for God's flock.

**PASSAGE:** Have a volunteer read 1 Peter 5:1-5.

## DISCUSSION:

1. Peter exhorts the Elders of the churches. Why would it be advantageous for churches to have a plurality, or several, Elders who help lead the church?
2. Read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. What biblical qualifications are given in these passages for someone to be considered an Elder? Why would these qualifications be important?
3. According to 1 Peter 5:2-3, what are the responsibilities of Elders?
4. Who are "the flock of God that is among you" that Elders are to shepherd?
5. What are Elders to avoid from these verses?
6. What does that mean that Jesus is the Chief Shepherd?
7. What should it look like for church members to be subject to their Elders?
8. What role does humility play, both for Elders and for church members?
9. How should we respond to the statement, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"?

## APPLICATION:

10. Where is pride either trying to creep in or already at work in your life?
11. One sign that you are willing to submit to the leaders of a church is by becoming a member. Are you a member of First Light? If not, what's holding you back? *Sign up for the next Discover Membership.*

## K4 CONNECTION:

The Elders and leadership of First Light Church shepherd the flock of God at First Light to be disciples who go out and make more disciples. Our Elders help us stay on track and focused on the vision God has for us to see 1,000 new families restored in Christ. They care for our souls by helping us remember that we have a mission and people to pursue so we can help them find faith and find family!

## CARE AND PRAY:

- Pray for the Elders of our church.
- Share any prayer requests and any needs with each other.

## COMMENTARY

**[v.1]** The connection (“so”) between the close of 4:19 and the beginning of 5:1 must be noted. Peter anticipated that Elders, who constitute the visible leadership of the local church, would likely be the first to endure persecution. The suffering and persecution all believers face (4:12–19) puts a special strain on leaders. They need to understand what is required of them, especially when the sheep are being harassed.

Peter identifies with them as a fellow Elder in order to emphasize his understanding of their fears and temptations. He was a “witness” of the sufferings of Christ not because he observed the crucifixion but because he faithfully bore testimony to it (cf. Rev. 2:13; 11:3; 17:6). Although God’s people, including Elders, will likely “suffer according to God’s will” (1 Pet. 4:19), they also, like Peter, will share or “partake” in the glory to be revealed when Christ returns (cf. 1:7, 13; esp. 4:13).

In the NT the words “Elder” (presbyteros) and “bishop” (episkopos) describe the same office or authoritative function (as seen, e.g., in Acts 20:17, 28 and Titus 1:5, 7). “Elder” focuses on the dignity and gravity of the person who serves, while “bishop” (lit., “one who exercises oversight”) focuses on the practical function of the office. All local churches in the NT were governed by a plurality of Elders. The NT knows nothing of a local church in which only one Elder exercises authority (cf. Acts 11:29–30; 14:23; 20:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; James 5:14).

**[v.2-3]** First, Elders are to pastor or oversee the flock of God not “under compulsion, but willingly” (5:2). The impulse to lead must come gladly from within, not oppressively from without. Those who lead should want to be Elders (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1). “As God would have you” (1 Pet. 5:2) is more literally “according to God”: we are not free to organize the church according to our preferences but must do so according to God’s revealed will. Forbes rightly points out that such leadership “is to be done as God himself would do it, or . . . in a manner approved by God.” In either case, “The focus is on oversight performed with a due sense of accountability to God.”<sup>2</sup>

Second, Elders must pastor God’s people not “for shameful gain, but eagerly” (v. 2). Peter does not mean that church leaders should not be paid; Paul clearly says that they should be (1 Tim. 5:17–18). It is not “gain” that Peter is denouncing, but “shameful” gain (cf. Titus 1:7).

Third, Elders must not “domineer” over those in their charge, but rather ought to be “examples” to them (1 Pet. 5:3). An Elder should not be the sort of individual who exploits his position of authority to lord over others, always exerting his power, always demanding rather than serving, always insisting on his way even when he knows he is wrong, always flaunting his position. Instead, Elders are to be “examples” to their flocks of humility, self-sacrifice, love for God, passion in worship, generosity, devotion to family, and, most of all, obedience to Jesus in all things.

**[v.4]** In 1 Peter 2:25 Christ was described as the “Shepherd and Overseer” of God’s people, and in Hebrews 13:20 He is the “great shepherd” of the sheep. Peter echoes that language here in calling Christ the “chief Shepherd” of God’s people. In doing so he also stresses, by implied contrast, the submission of all Elders to Christ. They are the undershepherds; He is the chief Shepherd.

Peter next articulates the ultimate motivation for humble and deferential service in the body of Christ: those who serve in the way he prescribes “will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4b). Some see this crown as simply another metaphor for salvation in its consummate form (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10), while others recognize a particular “reward” that will be given to faithful pastors (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 9:25; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:8).

The crown in view is not one made of gold, studded with diamonds and other precious jewels, but is an “unfading” (amarantinon; lit., “made of amaranths,” which was a “dark red flower known for its resistance to fading”<sup>4</sup>) wreath. This is the only time in the NT that the term “crown/wreath” is linked with “glory” (doxa). The genitive construction here could be either of quality, hence a “glorious crown,” or (more likely) epexegetical, “the crown that is glory.” If the latter is the case, then Peter is describing the crown as the eschatological or consummate glory that all faithful believers in Christ will share or experience upon His return (1 Pet. 1:7).

**[v.5]** The imperative “be subject” is identical to the language of 2:13 and its admonition to be subject or submissive to “every human institution.” The single word rendered “you who are younger” has been taken as a reference to new converts to the faith, to younger members of the community (both male and female), to all members of the local church apart from the Elders, or, most likely, to younger men. Peter probably singles out the latter because they are, perhaps, more inclined to rebellion and insubordination to church leadership than those who are older and more mature.

The appeal for humility now extends to everyone in the community (“all of you”), regardless of age or gender (cf. 3:8). The verb translated “clothe yourselves” appears only here in the NT and evokes the image of someone adorning himself with humility. Just as no one would ever appear naked in public, so too we must always be dressed or wrapped in humility in our dealings with one another. This is because God stands against, resists, or opposes those who are proud. Peter cites Proverbs 3:34, just as James does in James 4:6 (cf. Prov. 16:5; Isa. 57:15).

The “grace” God gives to the humble is not saving grace in this context, but refers to the sanctifying and empowering presence of the Spirit. This grace is God’s special kindness, His extraordinary blessing, His unique empowerment and enabling presence showered on those who are not already full of their own self-worth.

*Commentary taken from the ESV Expository Commentary Series 1 Peter 5:1-11*

## WHERE’S THE GOSPEL

Peter’s “gospel posture” in this passage is a beautiful comfort. He places the exhortations to pastoral holiness and love between two key proclamations regarding our identity and our reward.

First, in verse 1 Peter identifies himself as a witness of Christ’s sufferings. Of course, Peter notoriously botched his witness to Christ’s sufferings (Matt. 26:69–75). Yet he connects this sullied witness with the affirmation of his being a “fellow Elder” and one who will partake in heavenly glory with other Elders (1 Pet. 5:1). His witness to Christ gives him credentials of authority to instruct others but, at the same moment, does not separate him from the humanity of other church leaders that require the crucifixion Peter witnessed (v. 1). Thus, right with this authoritative exhortation to live for the gospel is Peter’s acknowledgment that he needs it. The gospel is for sinners like Peter. Peter makes no admonition without acknowledging his own vulnerabilities.

After these pastoral exhortations, Peter reminds the Elders of their reward (v. 4). The chief Shepherd will provide a crown of glory to those who serve in His own pattern of selfless leadership for His flock. Herein lies the power to obey: looking back to Jesus’ sacrifice that justifies us and looking forward to Jesus’ return that will glorify us. All is taken care of. And all is of grace, enabling us to live and lead with selfless confidence, for Him and for His people.

*Commentary taken from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible 1 Peter 5:1-4*